

People Scrutiny Commission

27th September 2023



Report of: Alison Lewis Service Director Adoption West

Title: Adoption West Annual Report 2022-23

Ward: All Wards

Officer Presenting Report: Fiona Tudge

Contact Telephone Number:

Recommendation

That Members note the report and advise officers of any areas about which they would like further information.

Summary

Adoption West is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Wiltshire Council. The Adoption West Annual Report for the period April 2022 to March 2023 outlines the activity of the agency over that period and includes the agency's performance data across family finding, adopter recruitment, adoption panels and adoption support services. An important aspect of the report is the focus on the practice of the agency and experience of people who have been involved with Adoption West in the year.

The significant issues in the report are:

- 125 children have had plans for adoption, noticeably higher than the previous year.
- The number of ADMs has remained largely consistent across all four quarters
- Placement orders were granted for 100 children and 78 children have been placed for adoption.
- 84 children were adopted in this period, which is 6 less than last.
- Some families have experienced delays in gaining adoption orders due to medical compliance issues with regards to seeking birth parent consent to access medical records
- This year has seen a significant increase in early permanence activity with an increase in referrals from the local authorities and 36 children placed with adopters temporarily approved as foster carers. This is an increase of 64% from 2021-2022.
- The number of children placed with Adoption West adopters has increased for the third year to 82%.

1. Policy**2. Consultation**

Internal None

External None

3. Background

- a) Adoption West is a Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) commissioned by Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Gloucestershire County Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and Wiltshire Council. The agency is a local authority company wholly owned by the aforementioned local authorities. As a separate legal entity from the local authorities Adoption West is registered with Ofsted as a Voluntary Adoption Agency.
- b) This is Adoption West's fourth Annual report and provides the agency's performance data across family finding, adopter recruitment, adoption panels and adoption support services. An important aspect of the report is the focus on the practice of the agency and experience of people who have been involved with Adoption West in the year. The inclusion of more feedback from service users was a recommendation from Ofsted. The report will be published on the Adoption West Website.
- c) This report is produced in accordance with National Minimum Standard 25.6, which details that the Voluntary Adoption Agency Board Members should:
 - Receive a written report on the management, outcomes and financial state of the agency, every six months.
 - Monitor the management and outcomes of the services provided, in order to satisfy themselves that the service is effective and is achieving good outcomes for children and/or service users.
 - Satisfy themselves that the agency is complying with the conditions of registration.
 - It is also a requirement of the Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF): voluntary adoption agencies, that the six-monthly reports are shared with Ofsted on an annual basis.
 - Appendix A of the Annual Report provides details the governance, commissioning, and local government scrutiny arrangements.

4. Other Options Considered

None

5. Risk Assessment

None

6. Public Sector Equality Duties

The Public sector equality duty came in to force in April 2011 (s.149 of the Equality Act 2010) and public authorities like the Ministry of Justice are now required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to achieve the objectives set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

To ensure transparency, and to assist in the performance of this duty, the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 require public authorities, named on , to publish:

- equality objectives, at least every four years (from 6th April 2012)
- information to demonstrate their compliance with the public sector equality duty (from 31st January 2012)

7. Legal and Resource Implications

Legal None

Financial

(a) Revenue None

(b) Capital None

Land None

Personnel None

Appendices: Adoption West Annual Report April 2022 – March 2023

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Background Papers: None